

## SPIE TRAINING VIEWS LIFE FROM NEW ANGLES



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A Marine from Landing Support Company, 3rd Support Battalion, runs in for a safe landing after being whisked away by a CH-46 "Sea Knight".

*Photo by LCpl. Barbara Sacerio*

(high resolution photos attached at end of article.)

**By LCpl. Barbara Sacerio**

**NORTHERN TRAINING AREA, Okinawa, Japan (Aug 28)** -- Stealthily they slip through enemy lines, quickly accomplish their mission and return without leaving a trace of their presence, neither seen nor heard.

They aren't reconnaissance teams, but Marines from Landing Support Company, and Motor Transport Co., 3rd Support Battalion, who recently took the opportunity to engage in two types of specialized insertion techniques here Aug. 13.

The Marines spent the day honing rappelling skills and performing Special Patrol Insertion Extraction (SPIE) rigging techniques. Both are popular methods of quickly inserting Marines into an area without forcing the helicopter to land.

According to Sgt. Jereme S. Covington, Helicopter Rope Suspension Training

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master, Landing Spt. Co., 3rd Spt. Bn, this is the first time this year they have been able to train on this particular task, due to the amount of coordination and cooperation necessary from various units.

"Because opportunities such as these are so rare, we jump at any chance we get to do any kind of training relevant to our mission," he said.

Covington and Sgt. Seth A. Campbell, Air Delivery Platoon, 3rd Support Bn., the only HRST masters within the company, gave brief refresher classes prior to the training.

"If at anytime a Marine is feeling unsafe he should be able to depend on us to solve the problem," said Campbell who acts as a safety insert officer during the training. "That's what we're here for."

Once the safety brief was over, the Marines boarded a CH-46 "Sea Knight" helicopter and the training began. The HRST masters kept the evolution safe by ensuring the landing zone was clear for the helicopter to land, and maintaining communication with the pilots.

After the all clear signal was given, the rappellers made their way down, as one of the safety officers stood below, controlling the rappel rope to break any Marine's fall if he slipped or lost his grip.

Once all the Marines had gotten a chance to rappel, the bird returned to the air station for refueling, before the Marines began the second phase of their training.

Meanwhile, the rappellers were strapping harnesses around their shoulders and inner thighs in order to prepare for the SPIE-rigging exercise. A safety line was tied around their midsection and placed underneath the harness. Once securely fastened they attached themselves onto the SPIE-line with a metal ring called a karabiner.

When the helo returned, a SPIE-line was hooked to the aircraft and dangled from a hole in the bottom of the aircraft, commonly referred to as the "hellhole." As the helo lifts upwards the ropes tighten, lifting the Marines off the ground one-by-one. They extended their arms at their sides to help prevent them from spinning uncontrollably.

Once the helo was in the air with its cargo of Marines, it circled the area, giving its passengers a bird's-eye-view of the island, and some first hand experience of the unique insertion and extraction technique.

"When I lifted off the ground I was kind of scared," said Lance Cpl. Marcelino L. Bedolla, logistical vehicle systems operator, Motor Transport Co., 3rd Support Bn. "But once I figured out how to control my spinning, I enjoyed the ride." Bedolla was one of the handful of Motor Transport Co., Marines allowed to cross-train with Landing Support Co.

This type of training not only instilled confidence among the participants, but it reiterated the Marine Corps' stance on combat readiness.

The training gave the younger Marines valuable first hand experience and for others it was a welcomed refresher. "I haven't rappelled in over a year," said Bedolla "This was good for me, because it helped me remember some of the basics that I had forgotten."

In addition to the experience, the evolution also offered a special treat for the Motor Transport Marines. "Since we're out here with Landing Support Co., we're given the chance to participate," said PFC Celven J. Hulbert, motor vehicle operator, 3rd Platoon, Motor Transport Co., 3rd Support. Bn. "Instead of just driving groups out to the training site and sitting idle, we got into the action."


"Training like this is done rarely, so we take advantage of the opportunity whenever there is cooperation among the key players," said Covington. "Today was an excellent day, everyone was focused and we didn't run into any problems."

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